



Epidemiologic Notes & Reports

Volume 32 Number 1

January 1997

Unintentional Administration of Varicella Virus Vaccine - United States, 1996

The following article is reprinted from MMWR,
November 22, 1996, Vol. 45, No. 46

Since June 1995, seven separate cases of unintentional administration of varicella virus vaccine (Varivax{Registered}*) to pregnant women have been reported in the United States to the Varivax{Registered} Pregnancy Registry**. All seven women had household exposure to varicella, and varicella zoster immune globulin (VZIG) prophylaxis was indicated. However, Varivax{Registered} was administered unintentionally instead of VZIG to these women. One of the women received five times the recommended dose of vaccine. All had negative histories for varicella, and the status of their immunity to varicella before receiving the vaccine was not reported to the registry. Gestational age at vaccination ranged from 6 to 31 weeks; four of the seven pregnancies were less than 20 weeks' gestation. Two of these women have since delivered healthy infants; pregnancy outcomes are pending for five women.

Reported by: JM Manson, PhD, RG Sharrar, MD, Merck Research Laboratories, Worldwide Product Safety and Epidemiology Div, West Point, Pennsylvania. Vaccine Safety and Development Activity, Child Vaccine Preventable Diseases Br, Epidemiology and Surveillance Div, National Immunization Program, CDC.

Editorial Note: The use of Varivax{Registered} is contraindicated during pregnancy (1) because its effects on the fetus are unknown and because infection with wild varicella zoster virus during the first half of pregnancy may result in congenital varicella syndrome (2). The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that VZIG be used for postexposure prophylaxis in susceptible persons at high risk for varicella complications, including women exposed to varicella at any stage of pregnancy (1). The risk for congenital varicella syndrome after natural infection with wild varicella zoster virus is 1%-2%; because the virulence of the attenuated virus used in the vaccine is less than that of the wild-type virus, the risk to the fetus, if any, should be lower (1).

Inside This Issue

Unintentional Administration of 1	Varicella Virus Vaccine - United States, 1996
Subject Index, 1996.....2	
Selected Reportable Diseases.....3	
Program Phone Numbers.....4	

Two potential reasons these incidents occurred are 1) use of the wrong vial by mistake and 2) a lack of understanding of the appropriate indications for the use of these two products. These cases underscore the need for health-care providers and pharmacists to carefully check product labels before administering any drug and to read the package inserts for any drug if they are uncertain of the appropriate indications for its use. VZIG is shipped as a liquid in 2-mL or 10-mL vials and must be stored at 36 F-46 F (2 C-8 C). In contrast, Varivax{Registered} is shipped as a lyophilized powder for suspension in 0.7-mL vials, must be reconstituted with diluent before use, and must be stored at 5 F (-15 C).

Before a vaccine or any drug is administered to a woman of childbearing age, a health-care provider should be careful to obtain a history of pregnancy or intended pregnancy from the patient. Health-care providers are strongly encouraged to enroll any women who were unintentionally vaccinated with varicella virus vaccine 3 months before or at any time during pregnancy in the Varivax{Registered} Pregnancy Registry, telephone (800) 986-8999.

*Use of trade names and commercial sources is for identification only and does not imply endorsement by the Public Health Service or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

** This registry is maintained jointly by Merck and Company and by CDC; Merck and Company is responsible for daily management and operation of the registry. The registry was established to determine the risk for congenital varicella syndrome or other birth defects following vaccination with Varivax{Registered} 3 months before or at any time during pregnancy.

References available on request.

SUBJECT INDEX **Kentucky Epidemiologic Notes and Reports** **Volume 31, 1996**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A Message from the State Epidemiologist January/February
- Cabinet for Human Resources - Reorganization January/February
- 1995 Physician Award April
- New Name - Department for Public Health August
- Seminar: Controlling Antibiotic Overuse September

CHRONIC DISEASE

- November is National Diabetes Month November

EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES

- E. Coli O157:H7 January/February
- World Health Organization consultation May
- on Public Health Issues Related to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and the Emergence of a New Variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease
- Emerging Infectious Diseases September

HEALTH STATUS

- Consensus Set of Health Status Indicators, Kentucky 1995 January/February
- Data from K.H.I.E.S. March
- Data from K.H.I.E.S. (Obesity) April
- Insights from K.H.I.E.S. - Physical Activity May
- Kentucky Lifestyles - 1995 December

HIV/AIDS

- An Overview of the Kentucky HIV/AIDS Program June
- Geographic Distribution of AIDS June

INDEX

- 1995 Subject Index January/February

INFLUENZA

- Influenza Prevention 1996-1997 October

INJURY PREVENTION

- Teenage Motor Vehicle Crashes in Kentucky: Morbidity and Mortality Rates and Economic Costs March
- Kentucky's Child Restraint Law Saved Lives: A Review of the Past 20 Years July
- Risk Factors for Firearm Injuries: From K.H.I.E.S. July
- Farm Injury Surveillance in Kentucky - What have we learned? October

NUTRITION

- March - National Nutrition Month March

PERSONNEL

- Emergency Consultation Phone Numbers May
- Update - "Epi" Rapid Response Team 1996 November

SCABIES

- Treatment of Scabies January/February

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

- Selected Sexually Transmitted Diseases April
- Kentucky, 1995

STATISTICS

- Reportable Diseases Annual Summary - 1995 May
- Kentucky Population Statistics August

SURVEILLANCE

- Influenza Update March
- Rabies in Kentucky - 1995 April
- Reportable Diseases Annual Summary - 1995 May
- Alert - Rocky Mountain spotted fever July
- Heat-Related Illness July
- Outbreaks of Cyclospora Cayetanensis - Infection United States, 1996 August
- Emerging Infectious Diseases September
- Influenza Informational Update November
- Poliomyelitis Outbreak - Albania, 1996 November
- Influenza Update December
- Imported Malaria and Use of Malaria Chemoprophylaxis by Travelers - Kentucky, Maryland, and United States, 1993-1994 December

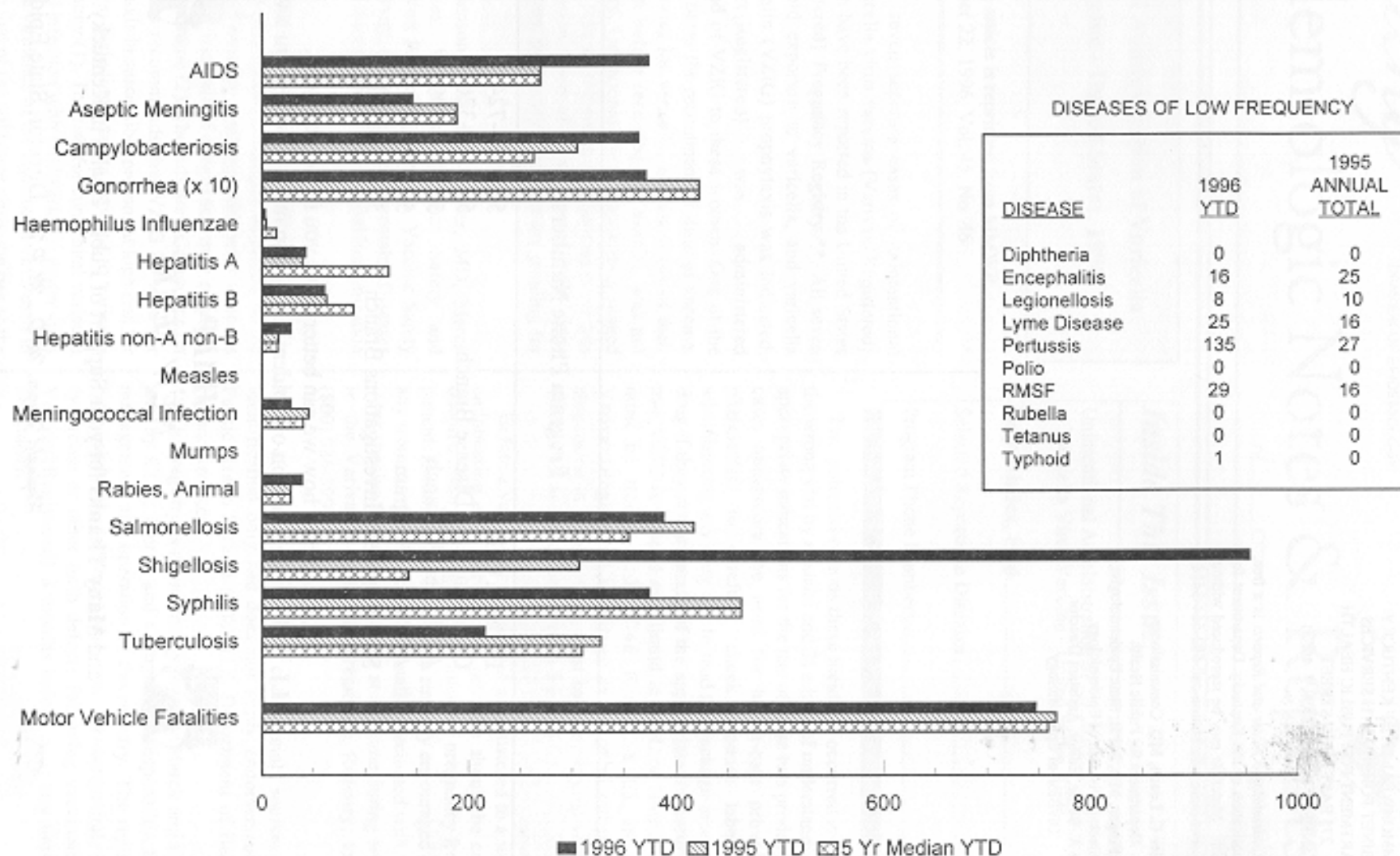
TUBERCULOSIS

- Tuberculosis in Kentucky, 1995 September
- Tuberculosis 2000 Satellite Video conference (insert) November

VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASE

- Tips on Vaccine Administration May
- Satellite Course (Immunization Update) May
- The Reemergence of Measles: Pacific Northwest August
- Video conference Announcement - Surveillance of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases September

CASES OF SELECTED REPORTABLE DISEASES IN KENTUCKY, YEAR TO DATE (YTD) THROUGH NOVEMBER 1996



Disease numbers reflect only those cases which meet the surveillance definition.

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
CABINET FOR HEALTH SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
275 EAST MAIN STREET
FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY 40621

Kentucky Epidemiologic Notes and Reports is a free, monthly publication of the Kentucky Department for Public Health. Materials may be reproduced without permission. For more information call 502-564-3418.

Rice C. Leach, MD, Commissioner
Department for Public Health

Reginald Finger, MD, MPH, State Epidemiologist,
Director, Division of Epidemiology

Joyce A. Bothe, Editor, Assistant Director,
Division of Epidemiology

Program Phone Numbers

Division Office	502-564-7243
Communicable Disease Branch	502-564-3261
Adult Health Branch	502-564-7996
AIDS/HIV Program	502-564-6539
Surveillance & Investigations Branch	502-564-3418

Let us know how we can better serve you in the new year.
ALL Staff of the Division of Epidemiology join me in wishing you a very



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR**



and **Many Thanks** for your Support of Public Health in Kentucky.

Reginald Finger, M.D., M.P.H., Director, State Epidemiologist